



And Then Came Spring

Juliane Paulsen



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AND THEN CAME SPRING

BY

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“AND THEN, AND THEN CAME
SPRING,—”

AND THEN AND THEN CAME SPRING

A samite of arcana here is laid
And here a span of words
Is out of chaos dreamed;
And here a step is heard
That rings like sunbeams helmeted,—is made
A song as one would greet.
And oh, how fair the green
Upon the springing wheat!

The herald of a Coming speeds as some
Soft wheeling of white doves
Against the budding wood;
And in the middle groves
Thine eyes are still and deep as seas where
suns
Make troth with star and star.
And oh, how still the wood,
And dread the Coming far!

The House is rent; and mystery from out
Of mystery is there
Still-born. The sun is blood
Upon the eastern stair;
And dried is all the sap of youth about
The temple, root and vine.
And lo, here Love has stood
Before an empty shrine.

"And then, and then came Spring—" and the
Spring's heart sang
With bud, and bloom, and sun and rain together,—
And all her fickle and enchanting weather.
Like a star, aloof, divine, that hangs
In clouds, She held me in a dream that rang
With fiery tears; and golden down the heather
She told with sorry-sweetness there a bitter
Love, and laughed and wept where crocus sprang.

Brightly, as in a forest pool aglow
The sunrise slants, the Spring went by in young
Regality; and in her train ran Youth
With glorious pride, and Love, and Hope, and
rose
In hand, they touched the face of Time, and hung
The sky with radiance,—the stars with truth.

Who has hurt thee, Mary? Thy deep voice
Like husky organ notes, does tell it clearly;
And thy dark, flashing eyes declare thee nearly
On the brink of tears. Come then, rejoice!
Thy Hebrew fathers never left unpoised
Faint-heartedness thy heritage. Cheerily
Look, as thou wert wont. Thou lovest dearly?
So brave? so gay? And will not tell thy choice?

She loveth Caesar! Jewish! But she's bright
With poetry and courage. Large her heart
Is with her fellow's grief. So would she carry
All her sister's burdens, and delight
In serving. And no pettiness, nor art
Defiles her, and—I will not hurt thee, Mary.

I saw thee once as thou wert passing by,—
But who am I to watch thee? Caesar, say
Thy bondmaid serveth well in languid days
Of spring, when Love's mute ministers of high
Desiring tread the spaces of the sky.

"And then came Spring—" Tears with laughter?

Yea,

I love thee so,—thou with thy kindly ways,
And subtle laughter in thy sea-grey eyes.

Not Mary, lord? Not any? Now I pray
Thee not to jest. Thou lovest Martha, wise
To guide the young, able to command, strong,
Unscrupulous. Nay, king, I bid thee stay
The word of praise,—*'Thou likest well,—would*
prize

The wayward Spring,—would laugh with me in
song?

Lord, hear! When from thy haughty shoulders
falls

The imperial toga of Love's senate-room,—
When from the world thy forehead's hid, and
gloom

Of mutiny o'erwhelms,—when Cassius calls,
And thine own Brutus smites thee, and thy pall
Is ready,—know thou this: despite thy doom,
Thy bondmaid is thy bondmaid. Not too soon
Can she defend thee, nor thy death forestall.

Make me thy counsel, Caesar. Versed am I
In woman's ways, and ward for thy sweet safety
Fain would I confirm. So fearful, lord?
Make me thy courage. In Love's court a spy
I'll be, to tell their silly wiles and crafty,—
Convict them with a mock, and slay with words.

Within an arbor lit with blossoms oft
I see a dreamer sit enthralled; and though
Her gaze is absent, happiness there flows
With mystery; and lightly as her soft,
Slow breath she learns the whole of wisdom
sought,—
Delight, and sorrow, and a love that so
Is filled with terror that a captive knows
She for herself that in Love's war was bought.

I would that I might hold thee in that place,—
Thou, with my dreaming, who art all sorrow,
And all of love, and wisdom, and delight.
I would be thy one bondmaid for the days
And years to come, and pleasures of the morrow
Tell o'er with thee through flower-lit, wizard
nights.

A woman cast her dreams in eyeless streets
And let them lie; she made her laughter low
With tears, and loved the answering noisy beat
Of tongues. She brought in hordes where one
should go.
Her soul's still waters did she lend for needs
Not spoken,—tasted salt of sweat and blood
From seas inscrutable, and plucked their weeds
Of bitter helplessness. And once she stood
Where Death was laid with purple lids fast-
closed;
And guilt of Höder's witless crime she knows
Within the circle of her days where hands
Of hours clasp each across a crimson sand.
And yet she did but listen to a song
Soft-toned,—but knelt at Caesar's feet too long.

Let us lie in some old orchard where
The trees hang down their fruit; some fragrant
lane,
Where larks of the deep meadow or dry plain
Sing for the solace of the place. And there,
Like worshippers stripped of their human share
Of grief, see rapture in the Unexplained;
And reverencing a god for his vast pain,
Put on the golden cloth of dreams he wears.

And then the time of hating seven-fold
Forgotten was; and there in ecstasy
Of passion, and eager-eyed, was Love.
And in the shelter of that orchard old
Was secret, stirring peace, and radiancy
Of thrushes' songs, and symphonies of doves.

Out here on level places runs the wind
Free over boundless acres of cool grass.
Unceasingly it flows along a path
Of wind-flowers, that dwell together in
A sweet communion of frail ferns, and dim,
Pale stars, reflecting skyey ones. And fast
It runs, unchecked and keen, as it had passed
Unchallenged bulwarks of the forests, rimmed
With hills. It is the wind of long desiring,—
Come away! And of the never tiring
For your lips on mine. And keenly sweet
It is, as love that cannot die. Ah, greet
It brave! It sees no God, nor ever saw.
Like love, it is the Law before the laws.

The setting sun stretched back a living brand
And sealed the song of the last, merry lark
That sang on glancing reed. And night was dark
Upon the fields of wheat and fallow land.

Another night! The flushed moon rose, fanned
By waving branches of the thicket where
The fireflies streamed in drops of flame; and bare
The stubble lay beside the pallid sand.

So swift my tongue is mute beneath the fire
Of this strange love; and sight is dark before
The wilderness of passion in my veins.

Another night! Thine image rises higher
Than the wakened moon; thy words no more
Are beaded streams of unimpassioned flame.

Not that my love is laggard do my words
Falter to thee. Not that your voice has ceased
To vibrate in my heart, for still the ease
And music of your accents there are heard
With sudden beatings, as the wings of birds
Aroused from covert; nor that your thoughts
No longer flow to me as fully fraught
With eloquence of love on love averred.

But because at every glance of thine
My soul leaps up to question, "Wherefore art
Thou worthy?" And my heart whispers, "He
Is Caesar, thou art thou!" For this the time
Goes silently. But certain counterparts
I carry here of all dear words for thee.

This is a summer land not needing name,
So still it lies,—so pure and fair,—afloat
With knee-high poppies, and with ripening oats.
And foaming in the sloughs, and through the
lanes,

Long breakers of white clover; and the stain
Of crimson mallows on the hill. Like notes
Of drowsy song, the bees hang o'er remote,
Low blossoms,—swinging in their lucid flames.

The very passion of love's peace is here
With thee. The pulse-beat in my throat I hear,
And, as a velvet-beating wing, thine too.
My hovering thought waits on thy words; while
faintly
Clover-bloom allures, and shy things quaintly
Pass, dallying, and flaunting summer hues.

The mountains loom, obscurely near, behind
The twilight haze; the canyons filled with keen,
Wild fragrance, wind in shade and dusty green
Into the hills; a faint allurements lines
The mesa's terraces of undefined,
Pale slopes, where just a pearl and opal gleam
Almost unites them. Dusk, and lights between
The dark, and me make little, friendly signs.

Silence, and night! And thou art there. I fain
Would ask one boon,—to touch thy face and
yield,—

Thou who art named in every falling day.
Daily and nightly, Caesar, do I say,
“Now will I seek him—” yet a pride I shield,
And play the woman's ancient, furtive game.

The full moon shines without a stain all o'er
A valley that lies under storms whose glooms
Are topped with domèd pearl; and darkened doors
At moments open on a radiance too
Intense,—on other fiercer walls. And now
Again there shoots the lightning-flame of distant

Brands, as if an angel with a brow
Of care looked down on us, and looking, listened.
And now there leaps a plumèd pen that writes
Before the glamour of that tragic face,—
That Countenance that turns to me its light,
And then to thee, in a far, haloed place.
Caesar, does One write, with burning pen
Of silence, deeds I might have done for men?

Does God sit so, in stillness watching far
The doing of his worlds? That One who plays
The dizzy checks of suns and planets barred
With splendor, are his eyes as these fierce rays
That smite the earth? Whence this wind that
shakes
No leaf, nor lives, nor faints? This pantomime
Of letters in rose-lightnings, and shapes
That peer out every opened door of flame?
No breath of sound attends the sudden brands,—
Does so a Memory forever count
Inharmonies man makes in a First Plan,
That such cold fire flows ceaseless from the Fount?
The tempest falls. Caesar, shall I fear
A prophecy of clouds in later years?

Eternal stand the ranges of the peaks,
Unchanging and unchangeable, sublime
Above vicissitudes of storm and time.
And ever-fresh, the forests clothe the meek,
Low hills with constancy. Still ever sweet,
The dawn renews its beauty; and the fine,
Stained bells, and humble turf restore the lines
Of youth and loveliness in dale and creek.

Oh, Doubter, look up to the peaks that shake
Their wings of opalescent light, and know
That Love spreads pinions like that fiery snow,
And folds us close with its eternal faith.
That long as the long, long time of earth shall flow
Will Love look on us with a tender face.

Sunrise on the Sangre de Cristo! Aye,
But watch the clouds roll slowly back, and see
How swiftly down their front the shadows flee.
And hush! Triumphant light comes darting high
From peak to peak, to the most distant sky.
And now the range is dyed like to a sea
Of tossing, evanescent hues, and seethes
Above the molten clouds. Why turn thine eyes
To the naked day to come? Nay, come nigher.
These are the heights of love, and clothed in fire
We dare ascend them. Let be forever
The transfiguration of the hour
When thou art glorified; nor let me ever
Know all my love for thee,—nor thou thy power.

The beauty of the mists enfolds us still.
From chasms and cliffs impassable it sweeps
O'er far, dark pines that fringe the snowdrift's
feet;
And azure haze from depths untold o'erfills
The glacier's brink where witchery wins the will.
The gulfs that gloom below the smoky wreaths
Are silent for foreshadowing the fleet,
Wild spirit glimmering among the hills.

What tenderness of line and hue! What tears
Of Spring upon the place where common winds
Keep troth! It touches me with mournful fear.
The morning breathes a soul not far—not near,—

But cloaked. And all the winds are faint that
bring
The voice of Caesar, as from far-off years.

"All Nature is a symbol," thou hast said.
"A sign whereby to read." Below us are
The stream of changing silver, flowing far
From out yon tracery of mountains spread
So daintily against the sky, and dead
Unending wastes of plundered forests, scarred
By human selfishness. Bereft, ill-starred,
The valley lies,—fit couch for Ruin's head.

Tell me the meaning. Desolation only
Is here. These blackened stumps, and fallen
trees,—
Are they the hopes once springing in the lush,
Green vale of Youth? So may one's life be lonely
With a wanton desecration? these
Lifeless trunks be days? Why art thou hushed?

Against encroaching emptiness, that never
Is by reassuring comfort here
Divided, flow the clamors thick and near
Of human hopes importunate; and ever
At imaginary gates, with tremor
Of their outstretched, poising wings, the weird,
Still figures of man's long desires hang clear,
And unashamed, and unresigned forever.

Let me not weep, despite the silence wrung
By fear. But let me still before the gates
Of Love's imagined citadel, where late
The glory of a royal presence hung,
Keep blameless watch; and unresigned, yet wait,
Believing, where a changeful Spring was sung.

Once our two souls did speed across the days
And left a sunny, laughing wake in Time's
Deep ocean. Thou first,—cutting through the
brine

Of sad and happy tears a fearless way,—
And I, thy foolish shadow, half in play
Forever trailing thee. And yet those fine
And subtle threads of thought were never lines
To hold a shadow. I was thyself, more fey.

And therefore art thou mine. Though never
should

I see thee more, nor touch thy hand, nor claim
Thee outwardly, —for payment of my tears,
And love that was half told, and faith that stood
A mainstay for my love, still art thou named
And known for me, through days to deathless
years.

Not that the times affright me with their dearth,—
Nay, fullest knowledge cannot gainsay this:
That I must love thee utterly. Nor kiss,
Nor word can take or add its little worth
In that one fact. Nor can a weary earth
Divide with stress of life, or the abyss
Of silent years, we two,—so close are twist
Our days of sorrow with elusive mirth.

But should thy life be squandered out in deeds
Too small,—then could I weep, and for my an-
guish

Drink the hemlock that is found in lean
And selfish living. Or thy fellows' need
Appeal, and thou be dumb,—then would there
vanish

Star, and Lodestar, and a world of dreams.

A wilderness of emptiness whose rim
Is ridden over by the feet of clouds;
A desert clamoring, with forehead bowed
Before the onslaught of the bitter wind
That seeks its fellow in the darkest brim
Of heaven's bowl; and on the alien world
A strangeness from the outer space is hurled,
And newer desolation, vast and dim.

Futility of grief! And love cast down!
There is no hopefulness in ravaged bloom,
Nor loveliness; no golden-grained crown
Of royal fields to grace the bridal noon
Of Loneliness. In vain the virgin dunes
Make lamentations for the tempest's wounds.

Up to Fortune's face I strain, and know
Her there, behind the shadows of her wheel.
Like wings of snowy doves that mount and reel
Against the sun,—fringed wide with silver glow,—
Her garments shine. Immutable, and slow,
The heavy-burdened wheel revolves. The weal
And woe of men is on her lips,—the seal
They gave, for which she cannot let them go.

Upward I reached, and saw thee there,
Leaning beside the cold, sweet, weary maid.
I named thee, through the turning bars as I
Went down, torn past. Oh, pitiful thine eyes
As hers that swam in tears. But where was laid
Thy hand, the once she cried, my heart is bare.

She weeps and smiles,—the girl with weary eyes,
And small, slight hands upon the wheel she turns
Through sun and cloud. And ceaselessly there
yearns

To her the naked poor as they sweep by,—
A glory in their faces as they cry.
The overflowing wheel, where anguish burns,
Unhurried and not slow descends; and spurned,—
Shrivelled for her woe, men strain and die.

There went a face so hopeless that I held
The immortal hands —such loss I heard
In that faint murmur. And she said: “Thy love
Must suffer on the endless round,—must move
Amid old days, remembering,—tell
Faint stars thy name,—make prayers of thy least
words.”

And then I dreamed,—my life is all a dream
I think,—that your sweet eyes were watching
me;
Thine embrace soothed me in my agony
Of grief; and thy close-breathing voice did seem
To promise me there was no night supreme
Could separate our lives; and sesame
Thou gav’st to all your silences; and keys
That held the portals where love’s radiance gleamed.

Is there no way across the world? No throbbing
Current of my love to strike a chord
Upon thy heart’s long-silent strings? No Lord
To answer prayer? Is there no end to sobbing
In the dreadful night? No other dew
Than my own tears? No life but grief renewed?

“*And then came Spring—*” Desolate the song
That once so gaily fearless swept these strings
Of color, and as honeyed bells that swing
In silent chimes upon a sunny lawn,

Thrilled with the breath of youth and courage
strong.
But ere their trembling ceased came Love on
wings,—
Smote, with touch full-arrogant, the strings
To new and holy sound,—chords loud and long.

“And then came Spring—” And here amid the
dead,

Gray wastes is silence, and the scourging years.
Almost have I prayed to hate thee,—thou
Unhurt by love. Thy gentle words are now
Become more cruel than public jibes that sear
The thought,—thy memory more darkly fled.

One spoke thy name in carelessness today
Amid a throng, and the one word came out
To me, thrilling as some great organ-shout
That overwhelms. And through the noisy way
Of words the fires of love leaped up, and played
Above the seeming-lifeless ash about
Thy memory. Again wert king, and doubt
Forsworn, I saw thee god in human clay.

I must awake. 'Tis I, not doubt, that is
Forsworn. With lighter words, and careless scorn,
I must persuade my comrades I am whole
Of any hurt. In solitude my soul
May listen to a faultless master-tone,
Remember almost that my love was his.

Memory doth like a star with slender
Tongues of rippling light wake o'er the stream
Of Lethe where I stand, and shadows seem
To weep, with softened tears, and knowledge
tender.

Now he who did with love both help and hinder
Must be forgot. Let me drink sleep, and dream
I never lived,—ne'er saw a spring-flower gleam,—
Nor laughed,—nor wept the hour of love's sur-
render.

But just now, as I stooped, thy soul did part
The impenetrable veil, and spake, with eyes
O'erclouded, and a sigh. Ah, let me but
Remember in the wilderness thy heart
Was great and wistful in that look and cry,—
Thou would'st have loved me ere the veil was
shut.

To keep a tenderness for those who hate,
Confused in grime and smoke. Or for the glory
Of a song to be beloved. Or story
Of a fire divine that kindled late.
To come to men as comes unquestioned faith;
A soul to swear by in the night of hoary
Age; a well of strength in transitory
Days of good and ill,—a match to Fate.

Oh, weary day! If I may only turn
The mirrors of my love to saving night
That none but thee may lie therein. And then
Will passion wane? The earth bloom dull as when
The seasons fade in drouth? No new, deep light
Open with each Spring that laughs and burns?

EPILOGUE

Comes he not swift beside the river tossed
Continuously in wan
Tumult? But now he comes,—
And now he stands upon
Thy withered throne of shadows built across
The Waste where souls must come.
(Oh, love, I hear the tears
Fall from the dying sun!)

I pray thee, goddess, give thine eyes to one
Who claims my soul, and bow
Thy forehead calm, and mark
His tenderness of brow.
(The thin, lit shadows part and meet upon
The languid grass; and dim
They speak, unfolding hands
In deep-welled signs to him!)

For me he could not love. Nor could I kneel
To him adored. But lay
Him on thy breast as soft
As Love in heart o' May.
(The spent souls fall from off the crowded wheel
Of Life, and each is dark
For breath,—and oh, how long
He leans upon thy heart!)

And with thy hands on his this love of mine
 Unfold to him,—this long,
 Tired love that cannot end
 Its circling web of song.
(Close-curved has fallen the white rose of thine
 Upon his brow,—so I
 Would lean to him,—lie hushed
 For that still look and sigh.)

And put your lips upon his languishing
 That I have dared not meet.
 And with your listless roses
 Plucked in weary streets
With pale triumph crown him, vanquishing
 My love. (I have heard
 Flow fierce throughout the world
 The whisper of his word!)

All thy cold, sweet body, Proserpine,
 Give him. And with his brow
 Beneath thy throat the lilies
 Of thy bosom now
Give over, Proserpine. Oh, Proserpine!
 (With bound looks,—entwined,—
 Oh, Lost to me, take this
 Love-wondered for mine!)

A STREET

I know a lane where pale clematis creeps
Along the hedges row; where the fragrant
Festoons are turned by winds as lingering slow
As distant voices that are heard in sleep.
And through the vines there flows the sound of
vagrant

Seekers of the starry bloom; and low
The leaves stir listlessly, as if a weak,
But fiery hand cast down their scarlet fragments
In the dust. Sad relics of June's rose,
Sere and laggardly they fall;
Leaves of dear remembering,—
Flaming soft and late they keep
Faith with one along a street
Where elematis clambering
Decks the hedges and the walls.

So sunny are the stones and warm! They are
The chiselled stones of history in bringing
Back a memory. Among the brown,
Uneven flags, and shadow-deepened scars
There lie the steps of yesterday, and stinging
Fresh, the print of Launcelot going down
To Camelot. But neither near nor far
Is there a shallop, where a maid for singing
'Tirra-lee' may wind a lily crown
 Wan and languidly, and die,
 Floating through the silent place.
 "He has a tender face,"
She said, flaming soft to keep
Faith with one along a street
Where the maples hide the sky.

The orchard fences lift a careless screen
Beside the corner crossing; far back lie
Deep verandas shielding generous door;
And beetle-browed behind the poplar green
The attic windows glimpse the passers-by.
We loiter in the shade of noon before
The picket gate, and smiling-eyed, we lean
In happy tolerance, to greet, and sigh,
And nod; and farther, where the maples o'er
 Road and alley drop their splendor,
 And the shadows faintly gloom
 Gold and azure in the noon,
 Shy and happily they greet,
 Keeping faith along a street,—
 Young, and fair, and tender.

The afternoon goes by upon the wings
Of drowsy airs, that fan the rustling leaves
With Autumn indolence. From far beyond
The spires, where high the sunset gilding clings,
The slender shadows come with cool, wet feet
Beside the hedges; and beneath the awns
Of starred clematis, soft they couch,—a fringe
Of frail, dark shapes. They are the dusk that
 weaves
From humming wires, and wildbird notes, the song,
 Love-desiring that I know.
 Faint, and clear, and holy-sweet,
 Faith it keeps along the street,
 Like a voice that's ne'er forgot,
 And stirs the heart for what is not,
 And whispers in the afterglow.

The little moon hangs straight above the high,
Black mountain heads, as though a rider, on
His mystic quest behind the bend of heaven
With scimiter alone would light the sky,
And twilit earth that slips beneath, beyond
The pool of night. So still,—so wan,—from
driven

Clouds and hidden stars, a wind comes by,—
A darkling phantasy of air. 'Tis gone,
And from the secrecy of night is given

Sudden arc-lights aureoles,
Banishing the shadow souls
Gathered in the rustling groves,
Walking there for grief and love,
Half-articulate and sweet
Keeping faith along a street.

THE HARVEST

So vast the stores of grain the prairies yield
At harvest that their level distances
Are more the floors of heaven overspread
With golden tapestry, and thick with sheaves
Of pale, bronze plumes embroidered, than the
fields
Of earth. And o'er the shocks the silence is
Of someone young and infinite, who treads
With buoyant step the plains; and from cloud-
sleeves
Not quite reveals majestic arms and hands
Of Destinies, that bend benign above
The stubble, and with eyes of summer love
Give graciously the harvest of the land.

The loaded wagons move from shock to shock;
And seeming-slow, the reapers lift the sheaves
Of heavy-drooping, bearded grain on forks
That flash the glistening sunlight from their tines
In fiery needles,—through the wheaten stalks
They glint like tiny flames. The men with sleeves
Rolled back upon sweat-beaded arms, and marks
Of earthy toil on brows and throats deep-grimed,
Have given their bodies to the wintry rain
Of April, and the scourging July sun.
Along the endless floor of stubble-run
They move, like tardy shadows on the plain.

One-time men went about a lesser plan
Of fields, enclosed by aging trees, or hedged
By thick-entangled branches,—stony, loth
To yield. And with them went a slower band
Of weary, stooping gleaners, who, with hands
Of toil, picked meager sheaves along the edge,

Of precious grain; and bound it, careful both
Of stalk and ear, lest in the teeming land
There should be want at home. With damp
scarves girt
About their sweating brows, where strings of hair
Hung close, they sunk their hearts in bleak de-
spair,
And broke their courage in the callous earth.

Then grudging did the soil yield up its grain
To frugal peasant, tilling with quaint plow,
And oxen yoked, the too-unwilling ground;
And frowning did it seem to take the seed
From the patient sower's arm, who fain
Would rest among the furrows. To the bowed
And deadened harvester, who early bound
And shocked his narrow field, there never reed,
Nor rustling stem of wheat, disclosed the glory
That went elusively before his scythe,
Evading, e'en as now it goes, and blithe
Declaring half the passion of its story.

Unveiled, it pauses in the heat of noon.
Not willing yet to grant acquaintance dear,
It walks in living gold of sound and sun
Abroad upon the harvesting. Its skirts
Are fragrant with the ripened clover-bloom;
And warm, its yellow hair is spread out here
In fields of summer heat. Here lightly run
The minstrel winds, with flying cloaks ungirt,
And with vibrating throats they tuneful cry:
"Oh, Soul Divine of fruitfulness and long
Enduring life! Oh, Spirit of the strong,
Oft-bearing Motherhood of earth and sky!"

A WITCH-LOVE'S LAMENT

Sun-born of a jasmine land,
Fire-crowned from a southern sand,
Came one with a crocus wand
And whispered a name.

Through ways of rush and bracken,
In ferns and mosses shaken,
Where wet fowls speak and waken,
Sped I in the dark.

I fled from a snare of song,
And wanton sweet flowerets flung
In perfumes remote and long,—
I fled from a star.

Then there rose from words soft-beating
Mad glories of visions fleeting,—
As echoes float, and meeting
Re-echo again.

Strange captor of bonded maid
Wert thou in the morning shade.
Unswerving and unafraid
In lilies of rose.

In lilies to red rose breaking
While kindled eyes were taking
The draught of love, unmaking
The witching of night.

So close was a hand on mine,
And closer a whisper blind,
And silenced the heart of time.
So late did we know

The dawn like an ocean streaming
Over yielding floors of dreaming,
Where figures start, and gleaming
Go out in a sigh.

My soul, like a dark night-flower,
Sprang from the passioned hour,
And swung in a sheltered bower
With singing of day.

(Oh, dreadful day of sorrow!)
Long marvel of the morrow,
And crocus wand that borrowed
The glamour of love.

And evening's straight path shone
On sea, and on marshes lone,
And on waves that were wildly blown;
And hurrying hosts

That ran with a haggard straining,
Crowding the red-gold Flaming,—
Seeking the shadows staining
The wings of the sea.

We heeded the vanguard swift,
And heeded the motley shift
Of phantoms like bubble-drift
On breakers of light.

And words were light as flying
Along the purple lying
Athwart the restless sighing
Of waning of day.

Thy flight was as the going
Of ruddy twilight flowing
From heav'n's marge, and sowing
The way with its blood.

And thick in your steps there ran
Wan rivers of living sand,
And faintness of jasmine land,
And flowers of crocus.

Oh, Shade of Even, weeping
The Shade of Midnight, keeping
The glory of day, and weeping
The sorrow of night.

And up from the clouding night,
As were love and fear unite,
Come pale witch-fires alight,
And motlier crews

Who race in long, pale foaming
Across the lost sea's gloaming,
And answer low my moaning,
And whisper a name.

SEA AND FOREST

Across the void there glanced
Amid the cosmic throng a solar lance
Plume-tipped with fire,—the earth, divinely
winged.

Through ages numberless the quaint device,
With saffron, floating sails outfurling thrice
The length of Time, went swinging to and fro.
Oh, shining space, where bannered suns did go
Wheeling and wheeling on the Undertow!

Then like slow turning in the darkened sleep
Of unborn life, was stirring in the deep
Of earth; and while the pulsing silence leaped
Beneath the yearning of the Unexplained,
The land's long shadow, and the sea's green plain
Was made the place of breathing, and of pain.
A shadowy dawn, and far, when vaguely in
Earth's bosom, as the vapors in a wind,
Was rocked the Life from which all life begins.

Immeasurably the planet-cradle swung,
A girdled sea in ropes of twilight hung,
And waning sails on either side out-flung,—
Sun-stricken harps boomed there inaudibly.

Not like to sunrise flaunting gaudily
On walls of fire and rose,—triumphantly
Life wakened. Nor where seething waters ran
Through dancing highways measureless to span,
And monstrous spoutings of Saharic sand;
But softly, on a dark and dreamless ocean,
Tossed and swayed with many a languid motion
Of tepid tides, that in a meek devotion

Reshaped the clouds that leaned against the sky,
There rose the struggle of a velvet sigh;
And as the opening of an infant's eye
That seeks for darkness in the troubled day,
Was stirring in the ooze of that bright clay,
And blind, weak groping for the open way
Out of the embrace of the mother-wave.

Out of the sea! the sea! and shell-hued caves
That always with a sapphire light were bathed.
Out of the brooding sea that held its slime
By time inviolate, and crusted rime
On margins yielded laggardly, in brine
Slow-heaved. Out of the sea where stained bells
Still choral liquidly the passing knells,
(Tongued moonbeams were those ruddy shells!)
Of lives that wandered on the leaning bars
Of shoaling sand.

Out of the sea whose far
Forgot Conception is the holy star
Immaculate,—whose passion of the beach
Is love omnific,—whose purple reach
Is flowing music, and transcendent speech.

Out of the sea immutable,—whose source
Enduring beauty is; whose deathless force
Renews itself from life destroyed; whose course
Is on the aging earth, there came no race
But like a seashell in a lonely place
Feels faintly verberant a wild embrace,
And knows at intervals the tempest-born
Delight of grey salt waters crashing on
A sounding shore.

And urgent in the dawn
Of life created of the first sea-folk,—
Who crept and loitered where the waters broke
Upon the warm translucent sand,—there spoke
The voice of hunger, and of new desire,
Bred of the empty living, and the fire
Of ancient yearning of the waves first heat,
And luring of the restless air that beat
Like lift of spreading wings and soaring fleet.

From gardens stretched in sinuous lines across
The pristine sea of motherhood,—from moss
That clung in shallows, by the stones embossed,
There wandered opal-armored life. From bleak
Sea-ledges, muffled in the fertile Deep,
And colder grottoes of the shore, all streaked
With blood-red dulse,—as though some helpless
thing

Had died by violence there, and lacy wings
Embalmed the tragedy,—from vines like strings
Of sirens' tangled hair, and giant kelp,
And low-tide wrack along the rocky shelf,
Crept the dwellers of the primal sea.

From violet-sunbeamed groves of leaves
That follow in the rocking waves, and weave
Their plumey fronds and antlered stems, they
came,—

The swift, dark rovers of the ocean plain,
And regal conches with their throats aflame.

Upon the shores that waves had chiselled deep,
In bayous hidden, where the rivers meet
And melt into the sea, and on the sweet
Salt marshes spreading far, they came, and slow,
In morbid famine of the ebb and flow
Of early travail. And from beaches strown

With silver armor, and with topaz shields,
They crept, as creeping goes the snail in fields
Of moss.

And where the rugged headlands kneeled
In moonlit marbles, came they twos, and threes,
On noiseless stealing upward of the sea,
Through golden weeds about the mountain's
knees;
And on, to pale grey capes of rock, all bathed
In light, up to the Forest Soul, arrayed
In copper leafage, where the churning waves
No more left skeins of yellow foam.

Oh, long
The living sea-shells heard the forest's song
Through ages modeling, with spirit strong
Their shells as sculptors clay.

Up from the blue,
Majestic desolation, and the hue
Of silence vast, into a silence new,
Where sunlight never fell; where long moss hung
Festooned from branches, and the Shadow rung
With fear, into the Forest Passion young,
That wrought, recasting, tempering the shells.
As fine bell-bronze it cast them over,—swelled
Their passions in the coverts and the dells;
And in the brood of giants, reared where sun
And moisture worked unhindered—there it strung
And tuned them delicately. As a cloud
Reflecting wonders of the sea, in proud
Free tones it painted them. And in the bowed
Green thicket's edge, where every lofty leaf
Was as a vibrant shield, returning brief
The sunset, there it lit them from a sheaf
Of arrow-shafts of light.

On every cell
Was the forest written for the shells
That quit the sea. Forgotten was the well
Of waters,—of the fathomless salt wash;
Forgotten the infinite time of clash
Of wave on wave; the endless years of crash
Of forest leaves to those who stooped and looked
With forest eyes and fear, from under crooked,
Sun shading hands. For still the Passion shook
The waving sea of green; and still the strange,
New forest tether held, with fringed chains
Of trailing branches; and the forest grains
Of living sufficed them. And forest ponds,—
That in the leafy wilderness of sounds
Like rain fast-driven, marked with tangled fronds
The lesser margins of dark-mirrored skies,
In solitude gave drink to satisfy.
And in leaf-bottomed pools, where forest sighs
Dropped down like falling needles, was their old
Shell-patterned sea.

Half-clad in steely mold,
Upon the forest's rim, and half-controlled
By fear, there gazed primordial Man, and stern,
Bold foreheads of the mountains saw blood-tinged
With sunset clearings.

There in mantles fringed
With bark of trees they paused within the edge.
And one with them, at plain and tasseled sedge
The Forest Passion looked from covert ledge
And sheltered pool; from aisles of splashed sun-
light,
Where creepers grew, and wild bloom shook the
night
Of dusk with cardinal fire,—and specters like

To Terror slunk in labyrinths,—for one
That ancient Passion was with Dread.

Master and Guest

It was, Indwelling Maker, that no quest
Could quite approach,—adorable, supreme;
Who, in the forest folk it shaped, put green,
Tough faith in many twisted dreams,
And judgments powerful, and instincts sure,
That from the forest were they born,—a lure
That lay in beds of knee-high ferns and pure,
Wild mosses.

Children of the forest they

Had come to be, and of the secret ways
Of wildernesses. To the Guest they prayed
With sacrifice of blood and fire; and deaths
Of enemies in war; and children's breaths
Expiring. From savage, sincere depths
They worshipped at the Forest Passion's shrine.

First dawn of faith that made the Tree divine!
That saw the Maker in the shift and shine
Of dew-hung leaves. That held the facile Greek
Close-gathered to the plane-tree; and the meek
And fearful glancing Oriental, streaked
With sacrificial wounds, to Buddha's tree.

Oh, adoration of the trees, agreed
Upon in that first dawn of memory!
Oh, song of forest adoration held
Through final days of the Immortal, knelled
By wanton deities of brake and dell,
Who left light traces of their going swift,
Beguiling laughter where they hid, and drift
Of sudden speech in faint or vanished shift
Of flying.

And through the time of later faith
When man no more saw gods, but in their place
The trees, with bark close-shut like secret gates,
Endeared by many stories old, of woods
That their own race had known; and in the blood
Of man recovered there the early blood
Of forest princes; and in the restless, frail,
White aspens saw a woman's grace.

The tale
Of human life runs long in forest dale
And pinery. But yesterday,—but now,
The Passion still demands its own, and low,
Reclaims with beckoning leaves and trailing
boughs
Its children venturing to cross the line
That, half-obliterate divides the fine
Spun memory of yesterday,—entwined
With customs garlanded, and fruitage plump,—
From life in places open to the brunt
Of day.

And still Man skirts the sheltered front,
And peers from planted trees before his door;
And builds his temples by the ancient lore
Of forest memory and trees adored.
And worshipping with evergreen, and moss
Of yellow tinsel, and starry candle-hosts,
And painted masks of sacrifice, the lost
Immortal of his infancy,—the first
Creator of the earth,—nor durst
To sever all the sacred bonds; yet thirsts
For freedom from his heritage.

From depths
Of woodlands over-running life, and death,
And home, and birth, and prayer, and lovers'
breath
Of cruel mastery,—from twisted root,
And drooping leaf, and virgins' emblem fruit,
And all-day summer heat of sun, the truth
Of mystery he cannot separate.
Still he lingers, and is captive.

From leaf-ensheltered home he contemplates
With forest eyes the plain's mirage and wild,
Sky-rimmed expanse. He cannot go,—the child
Of fear and shadows,—cannot dare the mild,
And open land untrammeled; not the still
And barren plain where scarves of heat from hills
Of thinnest air go wavering, and gild
The western dunes. But tethered to the groves
Of oak and laurel, and the dark woodroads,
He waits, and almost man, he looks, and clings
With backward-gripping hand, and forward flings
A timid gaze for haunts familiar.

THE JUGGLER

The square sleeps; walls turn back the waxing
noon;

And where have been the clamor and the cries
Of shrilling venders is a golden shade;
The world unshunnable in torpor lies.

Awake! Before the grimed doors there comes
A brooding spirit in the nerveless street,—
A soul of strange confusions with shut eyes,—
A tattered juggler with uncovered feet.

Alike for him the pits of fierce delay;
The desert where no echo falls; alike
The silence, or the wail of Rama's weeping.
From supreme cold morns, and hoar and haunt-
ed nights,

And less'ning skies, and icy, vigil stars
His craft was learned. He moves his stones,
and lo!
A troubled wind of footfalls runs along
The square,—a cloud of men hangs black and
low.

Up from dust's emptiness the juggler builds
His mystery. And hand to hand, and will
Set hard, the watchers mark his handiwork.
And lo! the wind, uncovering and still.

On ruined capitols where man had wasted
Rose his polished stones of slow-conceived
Thought. And wan in a divine worksickness
He set up temples out of dying leaves.

The achievèd beauty died. And from the crew
Three leaped, and spat; and one, a critic, cried:
“Saw ye he lacks in workmanship?” and, “Laws!
He has been taught no laws!” his brother sighed.

And hot the third man said: “This striving with
The Inconceivable!” and thrust his lip
As one who knew vast thoughts. And gusty
laughter
Came, and late, a harsher word was clipped.

And he, the young, the stern Idolator,
With yearning that to him is like a bugle
In the glare,—that paints his blemished stones
To dull the glory of the furnace sun,—

Hears dimness fall, and fountains break. Ah,
green
The pastured lands, and fair the cloudy screen
Where still a temple built with dressèd stones
Stands columned white. And over all the
sky,—

The singing sky of invitation, holy,
Solitary. And now the juggler dipped
His hands in clouds that burn like cloister-flames,
And through the square a wilderness there
slipped.

As one far-off he said: “So have I seen
A mother build in anguish,—a man
Sit closed in darkness drawing lines that flowed
In light.” And then there streamed from out
his hands

Such mystery as when day goes, and spirits
Soar the hills expiring momentarily.
And like to them a woman came with steps
Slow-paced,—with love's sad and patient lips.

And one within whose eyes unveilèd grace
Did lie,—and one, a little maid, flower-faced,—
Who dipped their vessels in the well that flowed
With pain,—and one swooned in the wide, blue
waste.

Then from the wan into the golden hour
The square was wrought, as tender moonlight
pours
To dawn, and he who had time-often heard
The dynasties of silence call, was mute.

The dust he marked with rolling of his hopeless
Pottery, and moulded in the noon
His gaudy clay, 'til swift the leaden stones
Were seen to shine,—a spinning miracle,—

And one by one in living words fall down,
Many-faceted and beautiful.
And each a little peace did give,—a flashing
Secret, as of quickened snow, or sounds

Of forests waking. Then the loosed sighs made
A mighty breath. And one: "I saw a round,
Dark room where rites were sung,—a fire
That burned in blood on sacrificial ground!"

Another cried: "The sky flowed like a stream
Dropping over chasms in noon dreams,
And there four laughing women changed to four
Tall men who like to mortals were not born!

Their fiery thoughts were jeweled on their brows;
Astride their leaping steeds that ran on air
They struck the red horizon, and as vast,
Immortal things, into the sun they bowed!"

And then that critic said,—that one who knew
The last alembic of great art,—“I vow
I hold the potter dull, but here I saw
A blown, white furnace whence a spirit flew.

In cloudy smoke I saw this fellow stand
And toss up on the topmost wave his brands,
Hurtling, monstrous. Yet he held here too
The fair and homely life within his hands.

And yet,—and yet,—” he mused, “there was a
ring
Of bodies there,—flung arms, and muttered
things.
I all forgot my melancholy age
In solving what this sorry fellow brings.”

WING WEARY

It was no more than a white dove,—
 A dove with wings of omen
 For old-time, watching Roman,—
That fluttered down the mountain sides,—
The never-ending, never-yielding
Walls of granite. But its slender
Strength could not support the tender,
Fragile feet that hung unshielded,
Bleeding on the rocks; and wide
Its wings spread aimlessly, and drooped
Against the cloud that here had stooped
To earth, as it would almost love
The stones that pierced the swooning dove,—
 The dove with wings of omen.

No thread of verdure was there here
 Upon, along the rocks;
 No living flowerstalk,
Nor thorn, nor bramble blossomed fair
To stay its weariness. Its breath
Cut cruelly its parching throat,
That once had voiced a liquid note;
Its closing eyes could not detect
The cactus-spears uplifted where
It fell; and fading sense could never
Spurn the lance that sharply severed
Its slight thread of life,—nor hear
The bubble of the waters near,—
 Oh, dove, forspent, wing-weary!

It lay, a little vanquished dove.
 (Oh, dove, with wings of omen
 For me, or old-time Roman!)
Its small, still breast was bloody-stained
With dauntless battling of the wind;
And broken were the plumes and torn
That lined the strengthless wings, and worn,
Sweet body. A little dove with thin,
Pink, battered legs,—with life-blood drained,—
For daring in the upper air
To pit its strength on mountains bare,
To win across the lofty crags
Where even eagle wings might flag,—
 Oh, little wings of omen!

THE PRAIRIE

MORNING

Alone, dew-drenched, the plains at early dawn.
A flush upon the forehead of the hills,—
A line of light beside the willows still,—
Pale patterns on the earth-mosaic drawn;
And triumph of a moment's twilit calm
Where ever lightly flow the crests, until
The waving grasslands touch the heaven's sill,
And Day slips lingeringly its dusky bonds.

Now from the cool, wet earth a whisper swells;
The first faint stirring of a homely sound
That lifts up liltily among the dells,
And calls insistently above the ground
In timid creatures' halting, tender speech.—
The prairie's voice, serene and eery-sweet.

NOON

A waving line along the plains at noon
Where wings go shifting through the flame-ring's
setting,
And foot-hills move behind a smoky netting,
And rise, and hover like a hymn in runes.
No smallest shadow for the running loon,
Nor reedy covert of the bayou's wetting;
But out, to borders of age-long forgetting,
A furtive lure goes drifting late and soon,—
A prairie sighing in the solitude
For long endearment of the sun and sky:
And soon and late forever does it woo.
With legends of a love to satisfy,—
With passion of a dreamer unrejoiced,—
The brooding silence of the prairie's voice.

NIGHT

Grasslands obscure in earth's deep-bosomed
night,—

Plains of dead sameness from the hills' faint
tracing,—

Dim, fertile prairies of no bournes nor placing,—
Youth Immortal wrapt in purple light!

Close-muffled as the secrets of the night,

And breathless in the sky's wide-winged embrac-
ing,

An endless prairie of no home nor gracing,—

Earth's barren pastures of no death nor life.

But with the slow night-wing there goes, impelled

From farther and more lonely star-sown wastes,

A sighing, and an unvoiced word that tells

The underthrob that beats in midnight haze,—

The prairie's silences of dark adoring,—

The prairie's lifeless life of long imploring.

POPPY FANTASY

(A Fragment)

Soft, as in the heat of day I slept,—
For I was drunk with poppies' summer breath,
And the blossoms, red, and white, and yellow,
Leaned in rapture each to each its fellow,—
There fairly was builded the house of man
In happy meadows where the sunlight ran
Down to vales of tender corn. Dark-green
Was the prairie, and the noonday sheen
Plundered the valleys with its golden shouts
Where silent morn and eve slip in and out.
And floating in the middle blue there lay
The castle builded o'er the poppy way.

Its domes were high and shadowless as noon;
Its portals were wide as slumbering dunes,
And with a flower-dew encrystalled, they
Did dance and quiver in a flash and play,—
Like water-shadows on a torrent tossed,—
Or frantic bubbles in a whirlpool lost.

And lighter than a wind that stirs the dust
On pollened stems, and brighter than the thrust
Of saber-lance athwart the sun, there came
A smiling damsel, like a dainty flame,
Where hourly out across the doorstones flowed
The motley blossoms in a pleasure-road.
(And oh, that maid, insistently and dear
Still lingers in her singing sweet and clear,
That like a dulcet lute in measures poured
Through poppy casements and through crystal
doors,

In minor music to my soul and me,—
Sweet motley blossoms in an ecstasy!

Then to my trancèd soul that waited there
She cried,—to me she called,—“Come near!
Come near!”

Her throat of melody,—a singing lyre,—
Was breath of poppies steeped in hungry fire.
Her eyes were dark for maidens' holy shame,
And drifting o'er the poppied stones she came
And plucked my hand with glances shining,
mute,—
Exquisite maid, with breasts like summer fruit!

Tardy went my soul beside the border
Of blossoms pied, and with the shining warder
Stood within the lintels of the room
So spaciouly enfashioned 'mid the bloom.
Oh, graciously she led my soul within
Where ever and forever went a wind
In zephyred streams of poppies coursing sweet
About the place, and waves of poppy heat
About us there.

It was a wind that bore
Strange gleaming damsels in a floating choir
Up and down an endless winding stair,—
A columned stair, whose opal railings there
But half concealed the damsels floating feet;
And passed their dewy figures frail and sweet,
That swayed like budding poppy-stalks, and
leaned
To whisper in a mad enchanting stream.

And oh, a madness were the tender maids
That midway up the opal balustrades
Called o'er to me! And oh, their faces fair
Were bright for poppies' rosy shame, and bare

Their bosoms to the drowsy wind. To me
They stooped and cried: "Thy love shall die,—
and thee!"

"But, ah, take care! Take care to pluck the leaves
Of golden saffron on his mantle sleeves,—
'Twill slay thee in the jubilee!" And long
Re-echoed faintly on the walls the song
"Take care! Take care!" So all the flowers
belled,

In nooning's lazy hour when petals fell.
And strangely shook my soul amid the shouting
And drooped its eyes before the lovely routing.

Then gloriously came love in radiant flight,
And in his flashing eyes a beam as bright,
As tenderly it shone as evening star
That drops its veiled beauty meek and far
Above a peak in mists encircling.
Before him swept his dreams. Their wings
Made silver tumult in the sunny halls,—
Made glancing ripples on the castle walls.

Then cried my soul in demon-prophecy,
"His touch is flame,—his kiss is agony,—
And death is in his slumber-breathing voice!"
(Endlessly the singing domes rejoiced.)
His pinions beat with suffocating roar,
His sandals touched the poppy-petaled floor,—
He stooped, and all the rocking castle rang
With sudden music; and the damsels sang
In gleeful shouting for the kiss of fire
That touched my lips; and swept the waiting choir
Of silver-winged dreams in madder flight
Along the stairway and the walls of light.

Their gay and tender fantasy so wooed me
'Neath sunny-throated towers, and roomy.
On poppies stainless white and wanton red
With dark-eyed Love a languid way to tread.
And fey went all the flowers in the wind
With looking and with longing; and within
For touching of Love's slender finger-tips,
And for the mingling of Love's holy lips
With mine, down bent the damsels on the stair-
way,

Spread their snowy arms and raiment airy,
Cried a-mocking to my soul and me: "Beware
The yellow sleeves,—the sleeves! nor dare
To let them jealously enfold thee! Oh,
Beware!" And like to mating birds that row
Of swaying damsels in their white and yellow,
Leaned and whispered each to each her fellow;
And shot their glistening arms to stay the dreams
That hung above them in the glassy beams
On wings translucent.

The drowsy noon
Came closer, and the Love's dark eyes did swoon
Upon me in the throbbing, silent vale,
Where stood the blossoms, motionless and pale.
There was no fragrance o'er the poppy fields,
Beneath the burning noon. And neither pealed
The singing of the damsels and the dreams.
And waned the domes against the sky; and
gleamed
The crystal dully on the fading walls.
Only Love, the heavy-eyed and tall
Young lonely god drooped o'er me till I knew
The saffron sleeves were stony-gemmed with dew
Of maidens' weeping.

Love smiled as fleeting
As the grace of windswept flowers meeting,
And as he sought some lovèd dainty face
Looked out along the wanly shimmering place.

Oh, came the damsel like a virgin flame,
And murmuring like mourning mother-dove,
With smoothing hands above the eyes of Love,—
“The heart!” she wept, “of saffron leaves!” and
both

The maid and god smiled then, as quaintly loth
And sad for some old sorrow.

Up the steps
That seemed with parching poppy buds,—that
wet
June mornings never reach,—to wither, were
The figures paler than the face of her
Who wept. And faintly vibrant did the sun
Of noon reverberate within the domes;
And shook the wall, and poppy buds, as shake
The whistling sedges in a frozen brake.

MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS

Slender birds of tempest, beating low
On tireless wings and dancing feet above
The water-wedge and spindrift that they love.
Grey-wingèd petrels flying in the snow,
And keeping faith that where they care to go
Is joy in strife; and that the sea they love
Must yield them living from the creamy shove
Of breakers,—courage from the storm opposed.

So flock the newsboys in the stormy streets,—
Tireless petrels on the changing sea
Of circumstance; and meanly clothed they dare
To snatch their daily food and drink from care;
Find bravest pleasure in the storm and stress,—
Keep faith along the brink,—be danger's guest.

SONNET

Still on the earth I go, and am content
With pleasant waterways and hidden rills;
And with the wide and windswept places filled
With honest daylight, and wild-flower scents.
Nor would I leave the meadows deep, where spent
Days linger; nor the over-hanging hills
That rise a breastwork, mingling with the sills
Of clouds,—supporting luminous sky-tents.

A froth I am and to the earth bound fast.
A moment's bubble of the ferment waging
To and fro in empty-vaunted might
That, rooted in the little clod that past
The sun wheels helplessly, in puny staging
Declare themselves like God,—sons of light.

SONNET

A wrinkled age and sere sits all day long
Upon the earth. The friendly darting shades
Of early dawn have vanished in the braids
Of burnished desert noon; and lean and strong,
A Greediness, with parchèd throat and tongue,
And eager eyes waits in the copper glades,
And in a holy selfishness arrayed
Repeats the burden of an outworn song.
And Damon? He is dead. And with him, He
Who was so wont to go in morning's raiment.
The Poor despair for sorrow, and the soul
Decays for weariness in them. Grown old
We know no more of love, nor gentle payment
Of love's debt,—no more of Thee in Me.

The Romans believed that every man had his Genius, and every woman her Juno; that is, a spirit who had given them being—(from Gayley)

I know thou dost belong to me,—a whole
That is the half of me, inseparable,
Oft-ruling. And part, or all,
I cannot tell how first we met, nor call
Thee by a name. But art that culpable,
Mad Me, that shows the loaf, and me the mould.

Poet-lover art thou in the night,
Translating with wild signs my slipping dreams;
Wheel in wheel Thou spellest, painting on
The dark. But, woman in the signal dawn,
Thou slayest with Herod-sword, and though Thou
 seem
Not me, I know Thee for myself aright.

Thou art the crimson sign that marks for me
And for my innocents untimely death;
And from the ruin of their sweet-pulsing lives
Turn'st reckoning; and with a stroke deprive
Me of my soul, and then my love, and saith:
“Behold the poet, woman, lover,—ME!”

So treacherous,—so subtle,—and yet me?
Awake to know me not, and baffled now
To bid me sing among the tents of Shem?
But leaning to some Canaanite, whose hem
Is criminal, I see me there, and Thou!
Must I be an old love divorced from Thee?

Thou art that One that makes me strange among
A brotherhood; that hot, self-pitying tears
Can dry; my brow keep smooth; and hold the
glass

For me, my soul, and Thee 'til we three laugh.
That, tiger-leaping, takes from me the years
That should be mad, and gay, and hopeless sung.

And Thou art still that Glory shent
Of evil; that Defiance to set odds
Of trembling love to fearful truths; Thou art
The tragic step, the timid look, the heart's
Last blazing misery that hates its God.
Thou art the world, my soul, and me, forspent.

THE WIDE LOW PLAIN

Dawn on the wide, low plain, and the moon in
the distance fading;
And out from the lonely bayou a crested heron
soaring,
Like the soul of a dying shadow absolved by the
tender light.
Deep, in quaint, shy notes, comes the murmur of
life awaking
Here where the trembling mist strains at a gossa-
mer mooring;
And far, from the gloomy arroyo, the coyotes wail
of the night.

Noon on the wide, low plain, and the sun on the
foothills burning;
And mirage, like weird magicians, waving its
slender fingers;
And the stillness of woven spells over all the
quivering plain.
Out of the cool Northwest comes the wayward
Zephyrus, turning
The plumes of the drooping Gilead, where balm
of Mecca lingers,
And the hush of enchanted silence moves into
silence again.

Dusk on the wide, low plain, and a shade o'er
the prairie creeping;
And here on the idle hillside the amber sunlight
stealing
From the jasper stems of the thicket to the pinons'
green minaret.
Dusk on the waiting earth, and the gloom of the
valley sweeping

Over the somber foothills, and a wildwood carol
pealing
From the throat of a darkling thrush in the alders'
dim silhouette.

Life on the wide, low plain, and the breath of
life in the living;
And far as the eye can reach, or the soul in deepest
yearning,
A measureless space about you like the ways of
a world untrod.
Freedom, and wide-winged hope are the gifts of
the plain's fair giving;
And symphonies far outsoaring the flight of loft-
iest dreaming,—
And paintings in transcendent tones enligned
for the vision of gods.

AT NIGHT

Why do the fields in the night allure me, lying
Wet in the dark? and the hum of insects eryl
Stir in my throat such a quick response? So fair
Floats a star on the river's brim where I lean,
Crouching, to listen; for greetings I hear where
Timorous things in their shy retreats come near,—
Near to me, speaking. And where was learned
this fear
Holding me fast in the moonrise' ruddy beam?

Music of wind through the rain, and spindrift
flying
Over the marshes; and plovers wanly crying
Down in the meadows. What calls me in the
rain,
Yearning and clear as the notes of wood-doves
lost?
Why do the clouds, and the breakers' foam-white
manes
Tease me with longings for flight? And here
where brush
Drips in the dark, why the sick desire for mossed
Tree-trunks, and odor of leaves, and woods' damp
hush?

Far in the night of the forest rings the yelping
Of beasts of prey; and the whine of creatures
whelping
Startles the dusk. Through the stillness of branch
and leaf
Whispers the patter of slinking feet; and close,—
Close in the twilight, the traitor crouch and leap.
Who was it struggled and died, in gaping throes,

There in the dawn, alone in the close-hung wood?
Who was it fought there, and won, in solitude?

Where have I known it before,—the snarl, and
scowling

Eye of my foe? And where was the conflict
howling

That makes me alert? And the sleek, sly grace
of limb,—

Why should it stir in my soul desire and dread?

Sure runs a memory back, of telling wind

Tainted with death; and yet will my human flesh

Shudder and stiffen,—ready for what? and fresh

Odor of earth arouse me like blood new-shed.

REMEMBER

Look in my eyes and remember
The pallor of past sunrises,—the sounds
Of an ocean timbre. Remember
A dream that still lives,—in waiting is found;
In sighing that comes from the wandered
And desolate places,—in rivers is drowned.

Must meanings be born out of weeping?
You slept, but I heard in a breathing-space
A sob in the arches go leaping,
And run through the crowded perfections of
place
And time. Oh, remember the sleeping
And waking,—the rainy dawn on a face.

Remember! Know if I am I,
You are more. Look here in my heart at the
hosts,—
The phantasm world that goes by.
Look where I look at the dark'ning ghosts
Of ourselves that are peering on high,—
That are passing, and peering at us.

Remember the touch of the past,—
The trembling, the imminent past. In my
heart's
Deepest hollows, Oh, love, hast
Thou builded, and building, forgotten the
parts.
Conceive then more lovely and vast
The place where thy naked soul slumbers
apart.

TO DOROTHY GRACE

Is thine the faith that goes without a name?
The something inner, vague, that sees the world
But as a sign, that now thy hands are furled
So meekly? Or is thy thought the same
That witnesses an endless shift of scenes
And understandeth not the meaning there?
But not a half-tuned string that snaps, and rare,
Potential melodies discords, does seem
Thy sudden laughter; but so dear, that I
Am half in love with life. "It ends soon,
And never more can be," Who lives that knows?
Thy lips are sad and tender as when skies
Are cast with clouds,—thou carol of all noons.
Death o'ertakes us? The hour goes?

In the region of the heart where some
Dwell all alone with faith and coward fear,
As thou hast played in sun and shadow here,
The toy of any wind, Oh, pretty one!
Is there built the temple of a "*may be*"
Victory gained upon a lonely chance?
It may be! Then shall I couch a lance?
With thy tenderness enhelmet me?
Before my loveless heart thy ringlet gold
Set warrior-wise,—defy myself with thee?
So be, thou dear, fair flower, and on rare days,
When summer odors flock, thou shalt unfold
Thy dimpled hands on hills and sandy leas;
Secure in love thou shalt be radiant gay.

OPEN! OPEN!

Open! Open the tall doors of your heart
To the worn-out winds that are blowing;
To the dusty ways, and the endless march
Of the world that is coming and going.

Set wide, Oh, set wide the dear portals
To the needy, and the unacclaimed;
And call in the weary, poor mortals
In your pity and love unashamed.

Make ready, make fair the rooms that are
wide,—
That are high with your learning and pa-
tience;
And bring in the tired from the place where
they die,
And tell them the law of the nations.

And the weak that are craven and fallen,
In the dust of battle afraid,—
Tell them the courage of honor,
And the strength of a man and a maid.

Open! Open the tall doors of your heart!
They are waiting, the craven, afraid,
In the time-weary strife, and the empty life
.Where the stones of their dreaming are laid.

Set wide the dear portals,—set wide;
And make ready the rooms of your learning;
For they come from love that has died,—has
died
In the night of an infinite yearning.

Make holy, make sweet the place that it sang;
And wear you the flowers of its giving.
Free-born of the tempest and sun it sprang,
And died in its passion of living.

Open ye swift the tall doors of your heart,
To the fainting and sore ashamed.
For I bring ye here, from the barren years,
The love that ye would not claim.

A ROAD

So many years, and years,
Since last I saw this mountain, banked
Flat and blue against
The eastern sky,—since last I saw
Yon gorge below the knoll
Of sunned, green pines. So many years
Have passed me since this road
Swam full of quiet lightings of
The mystic, coming night.
Darker once was this cool dell
For beauty, where I turned
To mark a southern star, and gain
A pause in sudden love's
Tumultuousness. And there I heard
Amid the silent asps,
A laughter, wondrous, luminous;
And there my heart was taught
The nearness of the chiselled peaks
Of far, far ranges built
In boundless sympathy. Oh, years!
Oh, road where I have prayed
For faith and memory,—I
Who never have forgot.

The youngest shoots of pines lift up
Among the stript, and dead,—
Life with Death. And alder trees
Of white Hope meeting, as of pain
And pleasure, after years.
Oh, road, expectant, sad,
Between the slender trees. Deep, deep
The slow and toneless chords
Arise, and in their waves desire

Mingles, and faints,—a deathless
Thing,—but in whose exiled life
Must glorious wanderings
Make, and often, to this lane
Among the pines, such ache
Of loneliness there is to see
Again, to kneel, to pray
Release from iron thought,—from hills
That call divine and far
Their wordless summons; from skies
That bend in dreams; from drifted
Sand that rolls beneath a step
As though 'twere water flowed
In yellow fire. Oh, road of leaves
That beckon, and languid
Winds that sigh! So many years
To not forget,—forget.

Roses are on the high-walled range,—
Roses of fire and snow!
Oh, near, near the faltering night,—
The gleaming grass,—the road
Without a name,—without a star!

THE POET

The falseness of the dream awakes;
The trailing glory flows
From round; and yet the wings that shake
The wistful dawn,—the blown
Sea-raptures,—and the foam that breaks,
Are faces that he knows.

The heapèd hills he knows; and those
Young souls that quiver like
A runner girt,—that sparkling Those
Whose fire-winged feet spurn dikes
Of earth; and that Destroyer knows
Who, passion-hungered, strikes.

And he has trembled for the kiss
That burns, and brands his grief
Where callous souls may see, and hiss
His nakedness. He keeps
His field of parchèd pain and bliss;
And fatal-dewed, he sleeps.

TO A MOUNTAIN BUTTERCUP

Sweet, that has been torn from a warm mother,
And winds that love,—Oh, gay and gallant bloom!
Oh, core of dauntlessness in spirit noons!
Death descends upon thee now, my brother.
Flower of mountains, furl thy waxy petals;
An hour in folding leaves thy soul may live;
An hour thy fragranciness of sun may'st give
With fading hues, Oh, thou of bonny mettle.
Thou tender thing in polished, golden shields,—
Wilt droop, discarded, to forgetfulness?
Not so. Behold, thou shalt forever be.
Even while thy blameless life thou yielddest
Thou shalt be written in regretfulness,—
Thou slain for mortal,—more divine than he.

Sweet buttercup, give me my words in gold
Like thine, to make thy loss a treasure-cup
Of glossy memory, where gathered up
Are happy braveries, and summer's soul
In burning armor. From this faint waft
Of thee let me braid lines that may be chanted
'Mid thy brotherhood that nod in meadows plant-
ed
By the careless winds. And where have laughed
Wild hearts of children, and all day long no ill
Can come, thou shalt be garlanded, and proud,
Sweet-voicèd maids shall sing thee, golden flower.
Death descends upon thee. Spend thou still
Thy lavish spirit, that the singers loud
May tell the briefness of a lovely hour.

Flower of the stormy crag, hold yet awhile
The mountain fastness in thee,—thou uptorn
From all thy wildwood banqueting,—thou born
To be sport of butterflies, and guile
Of painted dragons. All overthrown
Thou liest here, the Waster's spoil, and breath
By breath, learnest, I think, the way of death,—
A body whence the soul is lately flown
In fragrance. Sweet, wert thou once deeply
touched

With wonder of the light? And didst thou darken
Day with bootless visions too? Oh, flower,
Fast-fading to the mastering first dust,
Thou hast but cried to emptiness, and hearkened
To pale anguish in thy little hour.

Flower on whose hillsides all the winds commune,
Surprising thee with dolours of the vales,—
From loosened boughs with banished goblin tales
Delighting; and with solitary tunes
Pipe to thee of the wrecked hours by the thicket,
Oh, hear, sweet flower,—and e'en as thou didst
perish

'Neath the feet of Jove, when he that cherished
Darling wooed behind a prison-wicket,
Distilling fragrant showers of gold, so do
Thou wreak thy vengeance in soft odors. Be
Here a secret love, and these fine strings
Of jewelled stamens shall be strange, and true,
And perfect-tonèd harps in ecstasy,
And timbrel voices for the heaven's King.

Thou genius of the sun-warmed solitudes,
How kept these petals five their debonair
And glowing purity? And flower, oh, where
Was got this tenderness of look? Have woods
With priestly sacraments accepted thee?
And dews baptized thy innocence each morn,
Praying holily that thou wast born,
That thou canst live in careless death and me?
What sigh of immortality is here
In exhalations of a bonny flower?
Thou fadest, but a Presence half remains,—
A thought of June's sweet hardihood, and clear
Enchanted songs,—a lyric of bright hours,—
A laugh,—and gladness in the hearts of men.

CITY OF IDLENESS

Stands a sun-bright city of blowing highways
In the tiger-lilies of dawn. Oh, wherefore
Slumbers my love, heavily dreaming? Wherefore,
Oh, thou most lovely?

By the incense-fires at the southern gateways
Laughs a mad love-priestess for soft desiring;
Cries, thou art loving another than me,—
Thou, my beloved.

On the broidered banks she will leave thee weeping.
She will mock thy call in the city portals.
Buckler then thy heart for the lightness dreadful,
Ere thou forsake me.

Yea, and gird thy love with the warrior's new lust;
Arm thee fierce like light for the smoking altars;
For in wide, rosed streets she will see thee falter,
Oh, thou most lovely!

Dust of earth's dust—Ah, for tomorrow! Love,
I
Pray thee veil thine eyes in my breast,—yea, kiss
me
Ere thou forsake me,—ere me thou forgettest—
“Me thou forgettest.”

Stands the high-roofed city of sunny highways
In the tiger-lilies of dawn. Oh, wherefore
Lingers my love, heavily weeping? Wherefore,
Oh thou most lovely?

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